

[The Arizona Republic](#)

Jodie Snyder

America must reduce its dependence on energy because it's good for business and national security.

That was one of the central messages Friday at the Arizona Chamber of Commerce Seventh Annual Western Energy Summit held in downtown Phoenix.

Speakers ranging from elected officials to business people talked about the importance of becoming energy independent.

Tim Higgs, an environmental engineer at Intel, described his company's global energy reduction program, which started five years ago. Since the program's beginning, the company has spent \$19 million to fund it; in 2006, the program saved \$15 million alone, he said.

Intel's goal was to reduce energy growth by 4 percent every year. It actually has cut the growth rate by 5 percent, he said.

To cut energy use, the company captured waste heat from its boilers and recycled it to pre-heat other boilers. It also installed "energy-smart" controls on equipment to cut waste and to improve lighting.

When Intel started the program, company officials believed a lot of quick fixes were possible. Higgs described them as "low-hanging fruit."

Since then, officials have been surprised how many changes they have been able to identify and implement, he said.

"The more we looked, the more we found," he said.

Rep. Harry Mitchell, D-Ariz., said he believes Americans' dependence on foreign energy sources weakens the country.

"Every time we pump a gallon of gas into our cars, we pump money into the pockets of some of the very same regimes who aim to kill us," he said, referring to Iran.

The American military machine runs on foreign fuel, he said, pointing out that 97 percent of the U.S. government's fuel is consumed by the Department of Defense.

"The U.S. military uses 350,000 barrels of oil a day, nearly double what Syria alone exports on a daily basis.

"That means our fighter planes, transport planes, helicopters, tanks and Humvees all require oil we import from the Persian Gulf," he said.

Reducing that dependence on foreign oil sources also could be a boon to the U.S. economy, he said.

"Done right, this should not be a story about starvation and sacrifice," he said.

Sean Seitz, president of American Solar Electric, based in Scottsdale, said that he is seeing a positive impact. He believes his company's sales of solar units to non-residential customers this year will increase tenfold over last year.